DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 098 853 HE 006 030

AUTHOR Maher, Tom
TITLE Building Quality into New Forms of Undergraduate Education.
PUB DATE [74]
NOTE 14p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Educational Accountability; *Educational Assessment; *Educational Quality; *Higher Education; *Program Evaluation; *Undergraduate Study

ABSTRACT

This document suggests a number of ways of thinking about quality control in those undergraduate programs that depart from commonly accepted forms and objectives. Institutionalization and evolution of these new departures are required if our currently accepted model of mass undergraduate education is to be transformed into a more effective educational setting. To facilitate quality control it becomes necessary to think of concepts such as "reflection" and to discuss the implications for curricular goal-setting and for assessment. Since some new departures are extrapolations of existing practices, existing evaluation questions and procedures can be extrapolated along with the programs. Institutions should evolve their indicators of whether their students and their programs are really achieving the objectives set forth. Follow-up students may provide the key in the efforts to communicate the worth of new modes of education; however, it is imperative that a conscious attempt is made to build networks of working relationships among those involved in determining equality in mass undergraduate education. (MJM)

ED 098853

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BUILDING QUALITY into NEW FORMS of UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

by
Tom Maher, Director
Research and Planning
Ottawa University
Ottawa, Kansas

My six years of professional involvement in higher education have been closely tied to educational reform at the undergraduate level. At two small, private liberal arts colleges and in a multiversity, I have both watched and have been a part of numerous attempts to create more effective and efficient modes of undergraduate education. Although these experiences have yielded real disappointments both in terms of our ability to deliver new forms of education and the student's capacity to make use of them, they have also been punctuated by enough moments of exhilarating success to enable me to retain and sharpen a vision of what undergraduate education might become. It should be within our capacity to reach a very high percentage of American college students with forms of undergraduate education which will help build the personal and professional competencies and the habits of mind which are truly freeing.

Nevertheless, it also seems certain that achieving this quality throughout mass higher education is going to be much more difficult than many of us initially thought. I believe now that many reformers of undergraduate education underestimated the vital importance of assessment procedures in their brave new curricular plans. Without adequate substantiation of what is happening to students involved in experimental programs, embryonic curricular forms of potential worth will remain sealed in institutional enclaves or will linger, ineffectively, at the periphery of the university. Here, they will develop,

HE 006 830

over time, an elitist cast, appealing basically to the highly motivated, the creative, the risk-takers or the "drifters" among our student bodies. Thus, in the comments which follow, I shall focus upon various modes of assessment in the service of reform of that "educational space" we might call the undergraduate experience. My focus is on the development of new approaches to mass undergraduate education.

For some time, however, I have been troubled by the tendency of educational writers to make extensive use of the terms "traditional" and "non-traditional" learning. It may be that this cleavage in our thought about the process of education is serving as the proverbial red herring. Faddish imposition of this dichotomy upon efforts of educational reform collapses a complex ecology of change in American higher education into oversimplified and even false categories. To be sure, it focuses our attention, often, upon the wrong issues and the wrong levels of the "right" issues. For too many educators, for example, the idea of "non-traditional" learning leads immediately to questions of means rather than of ends. All too often, conferences of so-called "non-traditional" educators turn quickly to the technology of their ventures, leaving an entire set of basic issues begging for needed attention.

At the same time, in setting forth to capture examples of non-traditional study, one often quickly learns that he or she is pursuing a "will-o-the-wisp"! What is seen of "traditional" at one institution or in one region is wildly experimental in another. A cursory glance at the history of higher education in the United States suggests that many practices considered "traditional" are in fact relatively recent aberations in the ongoing process of education.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Rather than speaking of traditional and non-traditional, then, I would prefer to examine the current condition of undergraduate education in the United States. Understanding the rise and fall and the stability and instability of major curricular systems seems an appropriate way to begin to think about the assessment problem as it relates to new forms of undergraduate education. Non-traditional approaches then become refinements, extensions, departures, critiques, and possible harbingers of new orders. This dynamic, ecological model provides a richer view of the curricular world than does the dichotomized "we-they" thinking I fear is gaining acceptance in many circles.

In this respect, it is important that I delineate the model which I believe to dominate the contemporary American undergraduate experience. Thus, in the interest of communication, I shall oversimplify to a degree and caricature a "straw-man" called "efficient mass higher education." As I look at the undergraduate experience in both the public and the private institutions, I sense a certain sameness despite the talk of interesting reforms. The educational programs of the overwhelming majority of undergraduates remain dominated by a curricular model well-suited, (from an efficiency point of view), to the imperatives of mass higher education. Basic elements of this system are obvious and can be outlined briefly: large lecture classes, distribution requirements, a largely pre-cast major in a specialized academic or professional area and a smattering of electives. In one of several forms, these building blocks constitute the experience of most undergraduates currently enrolled in American colleges or universities.

To be sure, this approach to the undergraduate curriculum is brilliantly effective and efficient in a logistical sense. Politically, it enables the

departments which comprise the university both to fight fairly for "a piece of the action" and to maintain their dynamic equilibrium which has been called a "bu[illegible]cratic consensus."[1] Registration, advising, transferring and academic planning are simplified immeasurably. Faculty hiring is rendered less difficult since it is usually based upon a unidimensional criterion in the sense that disciplinary competence often overrides any other personal capability in the selection procedure! Academic standards, such as they are, are easily communicable and can be kept relatively comparable among institutions. Evaluation of students becomes a rather routine procedure. In short, the scene is dominated by a scientific-industrial model of the university and its camp followers. It has evolved to facilitate basic research, technological development and mass-education in the manpower sense of that term. It is effective in its service of the needs of a technological society.

I prefer not to think of this model as "traditional" higher education, but rather to view it as a stage in the evolution of the American university shaped by the particular social forces which have been characteristic of our society since World War II. Demands for research and development and for specific expertise and for the accommodation of a staggering percentage of each cohort allowed the embryonic multiversity to burst full-blown upon the scene before most of us realized its full implications. Surely the notion of what is "traditional" in higher education transcends this occurrence of the past fifty and primarily the past thirty years!

As one whose interest centers upon the idea of liberal or "freeing" education, in very oversimplified terms I like to think of "tradition" in higher education in a more liberating context. Two longstanding traditions are apparent in the efforts of centuries to develop both the "good man" and the "good society."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The first is the seeking of means to allow the university to provide a socialization experience for its students, to create expertise needed by the society and to transmit the culture. The second might be seen as the quest for the means of enabling the person to break out of provincialism, to create, to critique and to become an ethical explorer in pursuit of more meaningful cultural forms. In practice these two traditions seem to resolve themselves into an unending search for an articulation of how to combine their two basic objectives in both an encompassing philosophy and and effective pedagogy.

Perhaps it would be appropriate to view prospects for the "efficient mass education model" in much the same way that Thomas Kuhn has seen the "structure of scientific revolutions."[2] In such a perspective, the "efficient mass education model" of undergraduate education can be seen as a dominant paradigm or structure which shapes our way of thinking about and doing higher education. As we continually refine and extend our thinking about education in an era dominated by this model, certain questions and discontents begin to arise. If these discontents can be sustained and begin to appear legitimate, they may bring about a crisis of confidence in the dominant paradigm. If this crisis continues, one or more social and/or intellectual inventors may develop the outlines of a new paradigm which may supplant the old. In science, Kuhn notes new scientific world views dramatically replacing old --- the Copernican and Einsteinian revolutions, for example.

In the world of higher education, we cannot be sure of the shape of a new curricular paradigm, although we may see faint tracings of it in many of the innovations of the sixties, in the thought of Ivan Illich, or, indeed, in

the models developed earlier in the Century at Antioch, Bennington, and other experimental colleges. We can be sure that embedded within these innovations are questions about and discontents with the "efficient mass education model." While many of the discontents are embodied within a host of curriculum experiments across the nation, it seems to be that their essence can be found in a sequence of "new legitimacies" which have seriously confronted American colleges and universities since the beginning of the sixties.

Developments both in the culture and in higher education have made it increasingly difficult for any narrow conception of higher education to dominate totally the American university scene. Certainly, the approach to learning which characterizes the multiversity is linear, knowledge-centered, verbal, analytical and somewhat elitist. Yet, the multiversity and indeed the entire American higher education scene have grown so large and complex that they unwittingly, I suppose, provide many niches for formerly marginal ideas, people and experiments. Thus, previously whispered ideas began to be spoken of openly in even the most staid bastions of academe!

Sprung from their cages at the Antiochs and the Benningtons, from the proprietary schools, from continuing education and from the ethnics, strange ideas burst forth to prowl the halls of ivy. Absurdly simple propositions which have until now resided at the periphery of higher education began to enter faculty and administrative consciousness with the force of time bombs:

> .....Persons other than those aged 18-22 years old can benefit from higher education as can those who were reared outside of the white middle and upper classes!
>
> .....People can learn on their own! Men and women can learn in settings outside of the formal college classroom!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

.....Some "college level learning" has occurred in the experience of adults!

.....Media other than the human lecturer can transmit information!

.....A college degree may insure a job and/or wisdom, maturity, humanity --- but then, again, it may not!!!

.....Students can, with some guidance, create a legitimate course or "path" of study through an institution.

.....Our largest minority, "middle range" students, (those who compose 90% of our current enrollments), may not be all 'average' after all and may be capable of transcending themselves if challenged educationally in appropriate ways.

.....Higher order objectives such as the synthesis and extrapolation of knowledge can be planned for and achieved by many of our students than we had previously thought.

There are different levels of sophistication in learning and dominant educational modes may not be the most effective means of reaching them. Simple as these dictums are, they came, (or come), as a profound shock to many inhabitants of academe who came to maturity in the collegiate institution of the thirties, forties, fifties and early sixties. As departures from the "efficiency" model, then, the curricular consequences of taking the new legitimacies seriously threaten faculties with both a loss of control over the conditions of learning and a loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

The emergence of these "new legitimacies," (new clienteles, objectives, pedagogies), as serious considerations within the American academy was coincident with the campus ferment of the sixties. Grant and Riesman view the impact of related reform movements as a "greater degree of autonomy for the students; the student customers are freer than before to shop, to pick and choose, to move at their own pace. In that sense, these most popular reforms --- contracted majors,

free choice curricula, the abolition of fixed requirements ---- (these) did not seek to establish new institutional aims, but to slow the pace and to expand the avenues of approaches."[3] These, in fact, are often seen as the core of what is called non-traditional learning.

Yet, there is no question that the "efficient mass education" approach to undergraduate learning has real strengths beyond the logistical facts which help institutionalize it. It has enabled an unbelievable number of students, (up to more than 50% of each cohort), to have an opportunity to develop advanced competence and to come in contact with an environment where intellectual controversy and cultural and philosophical diversity are at least represented. Many individuals have been provided with the possibility of upward mobility, personal competence and autonomy and thus the real option of choosing among alternative futures.

On the other hand, the efficiency model of mass higher education contains what I believe to be exceedingly high opportunity costs. Douglas Sloane contends that the university continues to pay a price for this "bureaucratic solution" to the imperative of mass higher education. The price, he argues, is found in a "chronic inability to determine its priorities in teaching, research and service according to any rational and autonomous standards of its own." He goes on to suggest that this "bureaucratic consensus" has masked the need for a real debate concerning the meaning and possibility of general education and its relationship to specialized professional training and scholarship. He also points to the failure of the university to maintain

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"a sustained social criticism and a running appraisal of societies use of the knowledge provided by the university."[4]

If I were a terrible pessimist, I would contend that the "efficiency model" is in the process of co-opting the reforms birthed by the "new legitimacies." Yet as Riesman points out, it's now possible to move through most multiversities at your own pace, doing your own thing! What more could possibly be asked?

In actual fact, what is happening at many institutions both large and small is that creative, highly motivated students are availing themselves of the new highways and byways while the masses of conventional students continue to drift through in provincialized fashion much as they have since we began to create mass higher education. Perhaps it is true as Grant and Riesman point out that at this time we do not have the reserves of intellectual or moral energy[5] which we need to focus all of the institutional responses to demands of the "new legitimacies" into an effective and compelling new paradigm of undergraduate education.

Yet, if we are to have any hope of seeing new forms of undergraduate education begin to evolve and to predominate in American undergraduate education, I am sure that an elegant yet simple evaluation model is a necessary fellow-traveler. The next stage of curricular evolution may await two developments. The first is the discovery of the means to substantiate the fact that our recently contrived departures from the efficiency model are, in fact, having the desired effect upon students. The second is the need to discover ways of both effectively and efficiently delivering new forms of the educational experience to the mass of students. In my judgement, the second stage must be built upon the realization of the first.

At this moment when we are in effect taking our first baby steps in the evaluation area, the publics to which we must speak seem inclined to yearn for a return to a more "substantial" form of learning and to resonate to the cliches thrown out by various members of the educational establishment and by aspiring politicians. Consider, for example, a throw-away line by California's Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Governor-elect. Brown, in a campaign speech quoted by the popular press comes out against permissive educational systems which:

> "teach kids algebra in the third grade and remedial reading in the twelfth grade."[6]

Then, Sidney Hook, (with characteristic understatement), in a grandiloquent style demolishes educational experiment in a phrase:

> "The surging tides of irrationalism that have spawned some of the shoddiest proposals for painless and guaranteed education that were ever heralded as reforms will recede as the shipwrecked careers and lives of their victims become visible."[7]

It is easy to chuckle at these somewhat irresponsible statements until we raise the serious question of whether we have the data, (not the rhetoric), which can effectively counter these assertions. Playing, for a moment, the role of an objective college builder, I have seen little, (other than the testimonials of the "saved"), that would convince me to launch an educational Manhattan Project aimed at institutionalizing many of the new forms currently on the scene. Certainly there is encouraging data here and there from psychological testing and from well-constructed in-depth interviewing.

At my institution, I have seen enough indicators in our testing and interview program and in practice to warrant real optimism about the potential of emerging forms of undergraduate education. Sadly, however, the tentative data we do have is not the stuff that will open the eyes of most parents, most students, many members of boards of trustees, the appropriation committees of state and federal legislatures and, finally, many faculty members. No matter

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

how encouraging our data on the attainment of new levels of moral reasoning or of growth in one's ability to handle complexity, the esoteric psychology on which these notions are based will not carry the day in a contemporary public forum.

The sharpest and truest off the cuff assessment of new educational ventures I have encountered recently comes from Theodore Newcomb in an interview for Psychology Today. When Newcomb, a major force in experimental education, was asked about the record of the Residential College at the University of Michigan, he summed up the mountains of research done on this institution by saying simply that:

> "The system makes it possible for many kids to scuffle along barely, and for many others to soar. Some do almost nothing at all..."[8]

In many respects, the experience of Newcomb in the residential college is my experience in experimental learning writ large. Experimental curricula seem to result in a wider latitude for both success and failure.

In many respects, this responsibility asked of students can be growth producing for some but for many it produces a phenomenon which I call "fade-out." All too many students have shied from the unique challenges of an open system, either to drop out or to function at an exceedingly low level, avoiding all challenges and accountability in the system. Our approach to non-traditional learning, thus far, enables both the soaring and the doing nothing. In the curricular avenues provided by opening of the multiversity, creative and highly motivated students can soar, free of the rather arbitrary restrictions of our curricular forms. At the same time others may drift either out or to the discovery of a new purpose. We've responded in many cases with a fear

and loathing of any form of evaluation. I certainly delight in the soaring and believe that some drifting in a university environment could be an essential part of an educational program. Indeed, it may be that drifting can provide valuable space for adaptation. Yet, it's far from the entire story of hopes for our recent attempts to reform undergraduate education.

In talking of mass education, then, we must remind ourselves that most students in American colleges appear to have enrolled, at least initially, for very pragmatic reasons. As such they avoid many of the new avenues toward learning, seeing them as not applicable, esoteric or dominated by what they see to be "far out" students. They turn away from a lack of structure and have to be supported in their initial use of unstructured or unusual degree programs. Many faculty tend to see these students as persons "who don't want new forms of learning."

It seems to me that as we deal with this larger mass of students we cannot be satisfied with curricular structures which enable some to soar and others to do nothing. Better that we do what we can to see that as many as possible soar and that those who would do nothing are confronted again and again with the necessity of engaging learning, of creating, of performing and of being accountable.

Perhaps the root of much of our difficulty with assessment has been the crudeness and the often destructive nature of current forms. We know too well that the process of grading students often shapes the form of their collegiate experience. Certainly, this is an unintentional by-product of what grading is meant to be. Then, measures of institutional quality often ignore the value-added notion and, in so doing, re-enforce the status-quo. Very few institutions

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

measure or can make substantial claims about the transformation of their students from input to outgo. Where this is done, the indicators used measure gains on abilities at the more basic end of any taxonomy of instructional objectives, (i.e. retention of knowledge, etc.).

As both an evaluator and a teacher in an institution which has opened its curriculum and provides a number of opportunities for students to engage in new modes of learning, I am continually confronted with the following kinds of assessment questions and problems.

---What is the meaning of "depth" in a student-constructed depth-study (major). (And these concentrations of courses and experiences often vary widely in intent, content and quality). What criteria should one use to derive minimal acceptance levels?

---How much polish should an average undergraduate student be able to apply to an interdisciplinary independent study? (When many of his professors are uncomfortable with just such boundary crossing).

---How creatively must a group of senior students "solve", (in a period of 14 weeks), a social problem which has resisted the efforts of the "best and the brightest."

---When a student returns from a "cross-cultural" stay in a foreign country saying, "I've learned a lot," what does "a lot" mean? What should it mean?

---A student has participated in the founding of a commune which foundered with three months. How should this experience be credited toward inclusion in a depth study on alternative communities?

And on and on! Students reach out for a wide variety of learning experiences and incorporate them, in various ways, into the programs, the skills and the images which they are creating. We are left with the problem of assessing the competence with which they do this.

My task now is to deal briefly with some thoughts that I have had relative to the issues of providing both internal and external assessment at both the student and the program levels for new educational ventures intended for the "average" American undergraduate. Here, then, are some notes on assessment of the curricular departures in American undergraduate education which we hope will carry us beyond the learning constraints of the "efficiency" model.

Competency-based learning and/or reflection

Much has been written about the specifying of competencies to be gained by students and of the ways in which we may be more exact in our measurement of competency attainment. CBE is a very useful assessment tool in many specific learning situations. No doubt one of its major roles has been to enable educators to think about objectives and at last realize that there may be any number of routes to a specific skill. On the other hand, much of the use of very specific behaviorally stated competencies strikes me, in practice, as supporting an analytical frame of mind toward the assessment of learning. This is fine, given the sets of objectives one is interested in, but I have found that the development of strict behavioral objectives for measurement of skills such as "synthesis" often become cumbersome and extremely time-consuming in a routinized kind of way. Thus, while I am convinced that CBE has enabled us to move forward rapidly in the development of new awarenesses about education, it would seem to me that many limits exist. Let us then look at another way of thinking about assessment which specifies competencies which are broader and more difficult to measure in an adequate fashion.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Much of what we hope for in an undergraduate experience is based upon a capacity to reflect upon and extract meaning from varied experiences. And "reflection" is a personal synthesis of many specific skills and perspectives. Certain personality inventories (such as the OPI, (Omnibus Personality Inventory[8]), attempt to measure an inclination toward introspection and reflection. But, important as this capacity is to successful accomplishment in some forms of experiential learning, I know of relatively little work done in the realm of identifying what I would call the reflective process in students. Underscoring the importance of reflection, my institution has chosen to accredit certain types of life experience on the evidence of reflection upon them. In practice, this evidence consists of an essay by the student which deals with the meaning of the experiences and judgement as to adequacy by an evaluation group. We are still wrestling with the criteria and in need of communication with others attempting to deal with the same issue.

Reflection is mentioned because it denotes an attempt to recall and infuse meaning into the wholeness of experience and it culminates in "personal knowledge." No doubt these are other concepts which could also serve as the basis both for program design and assessment procedures and they should be identified, regardless of their complexity.

Points of Intensity

I have spoken earlier of the problem of the "fade-out," in which the student who either drifts and "does nothing" or who, after substantial effort, gives up and is carried along by minimal effort. It seems that many forms of experimental education provide a fairly wide opening for this kind of behavior. This option

can be a valuable resource for many, for a time. As a major characteristic of a program for the majority of students, however, it can be disastrous.

Given the heavy doses of money, time and energy allocated to new programs, (especially those which are based upon student choice), it is often dismaying to see students of great potentiality opt for minimal performance when with the right configuration of challenge they could have engaged learning as a gusto kind of life. In thinking through this problem, I attempted to recall those settings in the college or university where in the framework of a temporary social structure, students must synthesize, perform and present themselves and their abilities before a critical audience.[9] These are not especially difficult to find, particularly in the fine arts. Such things as music performances, art exhibits, dramatic presentations, debates and athletic contests all provide this opportunity for consolidation of both personal and professional abilities. There is no place to hide and though the criteria are not explicit, they are fairly well understood within a community of discourse. We've not really been inclined to develop the equivalent in the social and natural sciences and in the humanities.

It seems to me that this is one set of developments which we should attempt to invent, to make appropriate to our objectives and to place in our educational systems. An educational process in which a student would have to encounter and master a sequence of increasingly demanding points of intensity would more than likely evolve a higher consciousness about quality control in an integrated, "naturalistic" way.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The criteria - synthesis, personal investment, presentation, high stakes, review by a critical audience, built in feedback - can give rise to many possibilities. The most immediate and perhaps obvious example would be for each student to develop a modular unit and teach some element of what he or she had learned. (After all, conventional wisdom around colleges, says, "I really didn't learn it until I started teaching!") A bit more fantasy and we might imagine economics or a student given X amount of money to invest in the stock market and manage over a period of several years. Outward Bound and other wilderness survival programs provide this kind of opportunity as does the cross-cultural experience where a student may not rely on a support or peer group. A group of students in sociology might create an intentional community that would be assessed by mutual critiques and success of the venture itself. I have seen community planning students presenting their grandiose plans to residents of the very neighborhoods they hope to reconstruct. Televised debates, speeches and other forms of communication offer many possibilities. The basic idea involves a student putting an emerging competence on the line in as real a situation as possible. While we could all no doubt think of numerous possibilities, it should be noted that a move in this direction would necessitate close university and community ties. Many from outside of the university would have to be involved in the role of "critical audience" with the result that undergraduate educational programs might actually begin to turn outward rather than focusing inward.

Suffice to say that as an auditor of an innovative educational program, I would seek the frequency and the intensity and the inclusiveness in which

settings of this sort appear in the course of a program. For instance, my institution now asks students to complete a comprehensive exam over their depth area. While this can be student designed and tailored to the particular needs of each case, it does not present its unique kind of challenge until late into the senior year. The same holds for our senior problem solving sequence. We need more frequent and better temporally distributed "points of intensity." In any event, their existence and function seems to me an important focus of concern for any evaluation of an educational setting.

Using relatedness to the dominant model

There is often a relationship between some of the elements and the objectives of the "efficiency" model and many of the newer approaches which are seeking to move beyond this academic form. It should follow, then, that some of the objectives stated for elements of standard programs can aid us in thinking through objectives of and means for assessing the new curricular departures. The same holds for the relatively low level evaluation procedures which characterize the efficiency model.

An example with which I am most familiar is the idea of the "major." Supposedly, a student who majors in something or another should emerge with a thorough understanding of the structure of a particular academic area and a fairly high degree of competence in its methodology. How, then, should the "non-traditional" educator respond to the assessment problem inherent in a student designed major. Unfortunately, I believe, many of us have been inclined to rejoice that the student can do his or her thing, pick and choose and not be burdened by silly requirements.

Excellent, but what criteria should we utilize in discriminating a true study in-depth from an organized hodge-podge of vaguely related courses taking

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

advantage of the openness of the system. Should we not hold that, as a rule, new approaches to the "major" should far transcend the experience of most students in most contemporary institutions? All that is really asked in most settings is that a student pass a number of designated courses drawn from a particular area.

Thus, it seems that the next question an evaluator of a program departing from the academic norm would ask, is how is the dominant model of the major, (or general education, etc.), improved upon in the new setting. If we can argue, (with data), for example, that the student is now aware of the context and principles of development of his area of concentration, that he or she has a demonstrable skill and a perspective which transcends individual courses and experiences, that the ability to link the principles of that depth study to other academic areas, the capability of applying its methodology to multifaceted problems. Does the student know anything about the sociology and the philosophy of knowledge that he or she is studying? Are ethical problems inherent in its theory and practice accessable to the student? Can he or she discuss the "cutting-edge" of the area in focus? Can he or she discuss the structure of the depth study with any authority in the area?

The point is that we must ask these questions. Then, the questions must be transformed into educational strategies which enable us to reach more potent objectives in a more effective way than the model we are attempting to transcend. Finally we must substantiate the effectiveness, and I believe that within the enshrined disciplines, (perhaps at the graduate level), there are many hints as to how we might assess new knowledge structures created by students. Let us then be parasitic as we search for new evaluative structures. Or perhaps cannibalize is a better word.

Evaluation of Phenomena

In examining the overall program of an institution innovating in education, I would probably be inclined to examine phenomena to perhaps a greater extent even than established programs. Certainly, you would want to be aware of the "quality" of entry into the program. What, for example, was the first month like? To sustain new models of education, hiring sensitivity has to be greatly increased and, thus, the hiring process should be closely scrutinized to see whether the processes which will insure the retention of supportive individuals are, in fact, operating.

How does student academic decision-making occur? How does a student elect to pursue certain pathways and not others? What is the nature and quality of student/faculty interaction? Where, how and why are students given responsibility? What do they do with it? How are faculty rewarded---both formally and non-formally. In short, I would argue that a coherent evaluative design focusing upon phenomena not directly related to program function can yield incredibly important data which might be essential to the quality control process.

Juries

Juries function throughout our land to do everything from putting bad folks behind bars to awarding prizes for architectural design. The style of the jury seems to hold real promise in the evaluation of new educational programs in a wide variety of areas. Being able to pool considered opinion seems a powerful tool, but one which can be expensive and will need much refinement.

At Ottawa University, we have successfully used the jury system in evaluating solutions presented in our senior problem-solving sequence. The use of juries

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

gone a long way toward enabling students to develop a focus more quickly and to sharpen their presentations. Nonetheless, we have quite a ways to go in terms of identifying and developing the particular skills needed by a jury member. (One of these has to be a consensus development mechanism.) The use of this device does encourage ongoing discussion among faculty about the kinds of evolving criteria which are needed in the process of assessing interdisciplinary efforts. Suffice to say, that the jury method holds real promise, but is in a stage of infancy as far as evaluation in most academic areas is concerned. It would pay real dividends, I think, to devote quite a bit of energy to the development of this form as a staple in the repertoire of assessment devices.

Your own Indicators

I have mentioned earlier that some of the measures of student development to support the effectiveness of new forms of education are too esoteric to provide us with effective argument in behalf of the new approaches. Nevertheless, I believe that it's important for each institution to identify the kinds of outcomes it wishes for and to begin to agree upon measures of these outcomes for internal use --- no matter how esoteric or crude. For example, we have utilized the O.P.I. as a very crude indicator of shifts in student attitudes which may be a consequence of new program development. (The O.P.I. reflects student disposition toward intellectual activities --- i.e., introspection and dealing with complexity --- as well as toward affective components --- i.e., anxiety level, altruism). These data can provide the basis both for fine adjustments in the educational program and for general discussions about the efficiency of a program.

There are many possible instruments and strategies around. Thus, the problem is not finding an appropriate measure, but agreeing upon what

to look for, hatching a strategy, and taking it seriously for internal consumption. ("Taking it seriously" probably means new kinds of commitments from both students and faculty in terms of their involvement in assessment procedures.) We should not fear to utilize measures simply because they appear to be in such an early stage of development and therefore are only approximate indicators. We've been doing that for years! Current grading processes provide only tentative approximations of knowledge, but the procedures are simple enough that they are highly communicable and have achieved widespread acceptance. Let us hope that one or more approaches to assessing higher order outcomes achieved in a variety of ways can be arrived at eventually. I am convinced, however, that we are in much too early a stage of development to be settling upon any one approach. It is particularly important that any monitoring system should include some fairly conventional or traditional measures of quality to provide cross checks with any novel approaches.

Follow-up

In new educational programs, it seems essential that we take seriously the idea of follow-up studies. Not only should we be able to cite what our former students are doing, but we should know something about the quality of the lives they are leading and how these reflect the learning which occurred in a new mode of education. Some cooperative follow-up studies are now under way and although the data collection task is difficult, it is well worth the investment of time and energy. We do need much more work, however, in refining the questions we hope to ask as well as the strategies for uncovering the answers to these questions. It seems to me that, in the final analysis it is here that experimental programs can communicate the worth of their consequences to the general public.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Networks of Evaluators

Given the growing importance of the assessment of quality in new modes of undergraduate learning, I am convinced that we need better channels of communication and forms of cooperation among those vitally concerned with quality control. Some of this, of course, is already occuring. But more needs to be done in the way of information exchange, joint studies, faculty and staff exchange and a host of strategies which can help create an "invisible college" among those working in the area. Such a community of discourse would be able to raise the visibility, the effectiveness and the general acceptance of emerging forms of quality control.

Summary

I have suggested a number of ways of thinking about quality control in those undergraduate programs which depart from commonly accepted forms and objectives. I contend that institutionalization and evolution of these new departures is required if our currently accepted model of mass undergraduate education is to be transformed into a more effective educational setting. My belief is that the potential is there, but real growth awaits the development of strategies and techniques for quality control. The procedures which I suggest are generalized and can be adapted to fit a variety of needs and situations.

I mentioned the necessity to think of concepts such as "reflection" and to discuss their implications for curricular goal-setting and for assessment. Building quality control into the program may be a possibility and I developed the idea of "points of intensity." Since some new departures are extrapolations of existing practices, I held that maybe the existing evaluation questions and

procedures can be extrapolated along with the programs. The case of the undergraduate major was discussed with its attendant new possibilities.

I also have argued that institutions should evolve their own indicators of whether their students and their programs are really achieving the objectives set forth. Follow-up studies were seen as a real key in our efforts to communicate the worth of new modes of education. Finally, I held that it is imperative that we consciously attempt to build networks of working relationships among those involved in determining quality in mass undergraduate education.

In these remarks, I have not dealt with the specifics of evaluating experimental education. Rather, I have attempted to cite some possibilities for our approach to this very difficult task. To be sure, elements of all that I have mentioned are in practice in a number of settings, although admittedly in embryonic form.

For growth and realization of potential we first need a commitment by students and faculties involved in experimental curricula to participate in the process of assessment. Next, we must find a way to make evaluation an intergral part of the student's process of learning --- feedback causing reflection and building quality.

If quality control efforts are properly assimilated into new curricular departures, we may just be able to infuse a new, (and real), excitement into learning, into the university and perhaps even into the culture!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FOOTNOTES

1. Douglas Sloane, "Harmony, Chaos and Consensus, The American College Curriculum," Teacher's College Record, vol. 73, No. 2, Dec. 1971.

2. Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, Phoenix Paperback, 1970).

3. Gerald Grant and David Riesman, "The Ecology of Academic Reform," to be published in Daedalus.

4. Douglas Sloane, "Harmony," Op.Cit..

5. Grant and Riesman, The Ecology of Academic Reform, Op.Cit..

6. Brown is quoted in a cover story, "Now, the Candid Sell," Time, Oct. 21, 1974.

7. Sidney Hook quoted in the Intercollegiate Press Bulletins, Vol. 39, No. 1, Sept. 2, 1974.

8. " "What Does College do for a Person?" "Frankly, Very Little." " an interview of Theodore Newcomb by Irene Tarvis, Psychology Today, Sept., 1974.

9. Roger Barker and Paul Gump, ecological psychologists have invented a term which they call synamorph. A synamorph is a recurrent social structure which exists for periods of time on a regular basis and in a specific place. (A college class can be thought as a synamorph as can the Thursday night bridge games). I suppose my "points of intensity" are really synamorphs that all students in a given program must encounter.